Perioperative care

Information for parents whose child is having an operation

Your child has been admitted to the ward to have an operation under a general anaesthetic. This could be for either planned surgery or due to an accident or an emergency.

What will happen before my child has their operation?

- You will be seen by a surgeon and an anaesthetist who will assess your child.
- Your child will have a special cream applied to the back of their hands which numbs the sensation in this area. This is in preparation for a cannula. A cannula is a very thin plastic tube that sits in the vein and allows medicines or fluid to be given directly into your child’s body. When the cannula is inserted a needle is used to prick the skin. Then the cannula is taped down securely and the needle thrown away.
- Your child can wear his/her own pyjamas or will be given a special gown to wear for the operation.
- When it is time to go to the operating theatre, a member of the theatre team will push your child there in their bed or cot. If you have a young child who wants to be carried, that is fine, they can also walk if they prefer.
- Your nurse will accompany you and the theatre staff member to the anaesthetic room. A play specialist can also join you in the anaesthetic room if your child is worried or anxious.

What happens in the anaesthetic room?

- Both parents can walk to theatre but usually only one parent can stay in the anaesthetic room until your child is asleep. This is due to lack of space in the room. However, some anaesthetists will allow both parents to stay, this should be agreed prior to coming to theatre.
- Your child will go to sleep either by having anaesthetic gas through a face mask or anaesthetic medicine given into a vein through the cannula in the back of their hand.

What happens when my child is asleep?

- Once your child is asleep you will be shown to paediatric recovery (on level three near main theatres) where you can collect a pager.
This enables the recovery nurses to contact you when your child’s operation is finished. We may also take a mobile number if the operation required is quite long.

- The pager works anywhere inside the hospital building. This therefore enables you to go and visit the concourse near the main entrance of the hospital while your child is having their operation.
- If you would prefer to wait on the ward, you will be shown back there by the ward nurse who is looking after your child.
- If your child has any special toy or comforter then please feel free to hand them over to the recovery nurses and they will make sure your child gets them when he or she wakes up.

**What happens in the recovery room?**

- After the operation, the recovery nurses will either page you or contact you via your mobile so that you come up and sit with your child. Your child may still be sleeping, but some children wake up very quickly so may wake before you arrive.
- Your child may be very sleepy when you first see them or a little disorientated and tearful. Both reactions are completely normal.
- Due to the nature of the environment it is not appropriate to have siblings in the recovery room, but two adults are allowed.
- Your child will be attached to a monitor while they are in recovery and may be having some oxygen through a face mask. This is completely normal.
- Depending on the type of surgery, your child may be able to have a drink in recovery.
- They may have had some analgesia (pain killers) when they were asleep and will continue to have them when they are back on the ward as needed.
- Your child will stay in recovery until they are fully awake, although they can go back to sleep if they want to. Once your recovery nurse is happy that your child is as comfortable as possible your ward nurse will be called to collect him/her from recovery.
- The surgeon who carried out the operation may come and speak to you in recovery about how everything went; if they are unable to do so then they will visit you back on your ward.

**What will happen after my child has had their operation?**

- Your child will need to have a drink and something to eat on the ward before they can go home.
- Once they have done this the nurse will remove the cannula (if no longer required) and apply a small plaster to the back of your child’s hand if needed.
- Your child may also need to be reviewed by the doctors before being discharged, but this is not always necessary and often your child’s nurse will tell you when your child can go home.
• Please ensure you have a supply of paracetamol and/or ibuprofen at home for when your child is discharged. If your child requires any additional or different medications, these will be prescribed and dispensed by pharmacy.

For further information, please speak to your ward nurse.

**We hope you have a pleasant experience here with us at Addenbrooke’s.**

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We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

**Other formats:**

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

**Document history**

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Advice for parents whose child is having an operation
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